



MEDIA RELEASE

CHARTER FLIGHTS BRING IN MORE FINNISH TOURISTS

A series of 13 direct charter flights from Helsinki, Finland, will begin arriving into Langkawi from today until 2 March 2011 signaling a surge of arrivals from the Scandinavian and Baltic countries as well as Russia for this winter holiday season.

The weekly Finnair charter flight to Langkawi is operated by tour operators Lomamatkat and Aurinkomatkat and is expected to bring in 2,899 tourists to Malaysia during this period. The first flight for the season is scheduled to arrive at 5:45pm today at Langkawi International Airport, carrying 223 passengers. Langkawi will be their gateway to the rest of Malaysia, i.e. Kuala Lumpur, Sabah and Sarawak.

This welcome development is a direct follow-up to the sales mission made by Minister of Tourism, Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen to Helsinki, Finland, in November last year. The trip was made to rejuvenate interest towards Malaysia as a holiday destination especially during the winter holidays. The Minister had met with key industry people comprising tour operators and members of the media.

Of the organized charter flights, Dato' Sri said, "We realize that the Finland market has been underperforming. My trip to Helsinki was made to specifically address this problem and to find ways to boost their arrivals. I'm very happy to see this response from the trade members there. I hope that the success of this

venture will prompt the aviation industry to see the potential of this route and take the necessary action to introduce a regular flight to Malaysia.”

Finland is among the important tourist markets for Malaysia. For a small country – with a population of only 5.4 million – the total number of departures and the traveling population is relatively high. Among the Finns, there is definitely a general interest in holidaying abroad. One of the challenges facing this market is the lack of direct flights connecting Finland to Malaysia. However, Malaysia is an appealing destination as it is a value-for-money holiday destination with favourable exchange rates.

Although Malaysia has been seeing increased arrivals from Finland over the years, there was a decline in numbers since 2008 due in part to the global economic crisis and rising fuel prices. However, efforts to boost arrivals have shown positive signs of recovery, i.e. from January to August 2010, Malaysia received a total of 14,732 tourists from Finland, signaling a 9.7% increase over the same period last year. In 2009, the average length of stay of each Finnish tourist was 9.0 nights and average per diem expenditure (daily expenditure per person) was RM317.70.

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